

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 DHA-02 MCT-01 EB-08 TRSE-00
ACDA-07 OMB-01 CU-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 OPR-02
SY-05 A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 /098 W
-----221555Z 040447 /41

O P 221158Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 478
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2765

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: GOP EASES ELECTION COMPLAINT LAW, PNA NOT IMPRESSED

REF: ISLAMABAD 2718,

SUMMARY: THE OPPOSITION PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE CONTINUES TO
REJECT PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S CALLS FOR A DIALOGUE. A RUMP
SESSION OF THE PNA LEADERSHIP DEFERRED FINAL DECISION ON CALLS
FOR SPECIAL DEMONSTRATIONS UNTIL THE FULL BODY COULD MEET.
MEANWHILE, OTHER PNA LEADERS, RELEASED FROM JAIL TOO LATE TO
JOIN THE LAHORE MEETING MARCH 21, SUPPORTED THE PNA HARD LINE,
BUT THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SOME PNA LEADERS ARE DISGRUNTLED
BY ASGHAR KHAN'S UNILATERAL ACTION IN MAKING SATISFACTION OF
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HIS DEMANDS A PRECONDITION FOR HIS DEPARTURE FROM JAIL. THE GOP
AT THE SAME TIME HAS TAKEN STEPS FURTHER TO LIBERALIZE DISPUTE
PROCEDURES UNDER THE ELECTION LAW. ALL OF THESE DECISIONS WERE
MADE PUBLIC MARCH 22, PROBABLY TO HIGHLIGHT THE GOP'S CLAIM
THAT IT IS BEING REASONABLE AND FOREBEARING. HOWEVER, THE GOP
ALSO SERVED WARNING THROUGH A MARCH 22 PAKISTAN TIMES
EDITORIAL THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PATIENCE HAS ALMOST REACHED

ITS LIMIT; THIS IS THE PNA'S LAST CHANCE TO REACH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY MARCH 22 PASSED IN RELATIVE QUIET; THOUGH DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUED THE DOMINANT THEME WAS THE GENERALLY PEACEFUL BEHAVIOR ON THE PART OF DEMONSTRATORS AND AUTHORITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE OPPOSITION PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE CONTINUES TO ADHERE TO ITS TOUGH LINE, REJECTING SO FAR ALL ATTEMPTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE WITH PNA LEADERS. A FULL MEETING OF THE PNA GENERAL COUNCIL MARCH 21 WAS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE MANY OF THE PARTY'S LEADERS COULD NOT REACH LAHORE IN TIME TO ATTEND THE MEETING AND BECAUSE ASGHAR KHAN CHOSE TO REMAIN IN JAIL UNTIL HIS DEMANDS ARE MET (REFTEL). A RUMP SESSION OF THE PNA PRESIDENT MAULANA MUFTI MAHMOOD. THE MEETING DECIDED TO OBSERVE MARCH 23 (PAKISTAN NATIONAL DAY) WITH CELEBRATIONS OF ITS OWN AND MARCH 26 (DATE OF OPENING OF NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY) WITH A GENERAL STRIKE. HOWEVER, THESE DECISIONS WILL BE FORMALLY ANNOUNCED MARCH 22, AFTER ALL LEADERS OF PNA COMPONENT PARTIES (SANS ASGHAR KHAN, WHO WE UNDERSTAND STILL REFUSED TO LEAVE JAIL) HAVE MET IN LAHORE AND CONSIDERED THE MEASURES.

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A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 /098 W
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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

2. THERE ARE OTHER INDICATIONS THAT THE CURRENT HARD LINE OF THE PNA CENTRAL LEADERSHIP EXPRESSED THE SENTIMENTS OF MANY OTHER PNA LEADERS. SOON AFTER THEIR MARCH 21 RELEASE FROM JAIL IN SUKKUR, WHERE THEY HAD BEEN HELD SINCE MARCH 18, MAULANA SHAH AHMAD ORANI AND SHERBAZ KHAN MAZARI HELD A NEWS CONFERENCE IN KARACHI. THEY SUPPORTED THE POLICIES THE PNA HAD TAKEN DURING THEIR INCARCERATION: NOORANI CRITICIZED AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL THE CONVENING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION AND MAZARI SUGGESTED THAT THE PNA HIGH COMMAND SHOULD REQUEST PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENT TO ACCEPT PNA DEMANDS AS THE CONSTITUTIONAL HEAD OF STATE. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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A POSSIBLE FLAW IN OPPOSITION UNITY APPEARED WHEN MAZARI, INFORMED THAT ASGHAR KHAN HAD ALREADY MADE THESE DEMANDS PART OF HIS PRECONDITION FOR LEAVING JAIL, SAID THAT ASGHAR KHAN SHOULD HAVE FIRST PRESENTED THESE DEMANDS TO THE PNA CENTRAL COMMITTEE AT THEIR MARCH 22 MEETING RATHER THAN PROPOSING THEM UNILATERALLY.

3. MEANDWHILE, UNDER DIRECTIVES FROM THE PRIME MINISTER THE GOP HAS FURTHER LIBERALIZED THE ELECTION LAW TO FACILITATE THE ELECTION REVIEW PROCESS. A MARCH 21 PRESIDENTIAL ORDINANCE EMPOWERS THE ELECTION COMMISSION TO HOLD SUMMARY INQUIRY IN DISPUTED ELECTION CONTESTS IN ANY CONSTITUENCY AND TO ANNUL THE RESULT WHERE THE COMMISSION IS SATISFIED THAT GRAVE ILLEGALITIES ARE PROVED TO HAVE OCCURRED AT THE POLLS. THESE MEASURES APPLY TO ALL ASSEMBLY SEATS AND NOTIFICATION OF THE RESULTS IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE ANNOUNCED 3 HOURS BEFORE THE LEGAL DEADLINE MARCH 21 (TWO WEEKS AFTER ELECTION DAY) WILL NOT BAR ACTIONS THROUGH THE ELECTION COMMISSION. AT THE SAME TIME THE PRESS HAS PUBLISHED AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN THE PM AND THE CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER. MOST PROBABLY THE PUBLICATION OF THIS EXCHANGE IS DESIGNED TO HIGHLIGHT THE "REASONABLENESS" OF THE GOP AND TO KEEP THIS IMAGE IN FULL VIEW OF THE OPPOSITION AND THE PUBLIC.

4. AT THE SAME TIME THE GOP-OWNED PAKISTAN TIMES MARCH 22 ADOPTED A TOUGH EDITORIAL STANCE CLEARLY WARNING THE OPPOSITION THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S TOLERANCE HAS LIMITS. UNDER THE EDITORIAL CAPTION "LAST CHANCE" THE NEWSPAPER CHARACTERIZED THE PNA'S ATTITUDE AND RESPONSE DURING THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN THE PM AND PNA LEADERS AS "UNMISTAKENLY TRUCULENT" IN CONTRAST WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPEATED CALM CALLS FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE. THE EDITORIAL HINTED THE GOP HAS DONE ALL IT CAN TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL SETTLE-

MENT AND THE BURDEN OF POSITIVE RESPONSE IN THE NATION'S LARGER INTERESTS IS NOW CLEARLY ON THE PNA. THE EDITORIAL WARNED "IT WILL SURELY BE MISTAKEN TO PRESUME TOO MUCH ON THE GOVERNMENT'S GENEROSITY. ITS PATIENCE HAS BEEN STRETCHED TO THE LIMITS ...
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IF ITS LATEST OFFER OF NEGOTIATIONS IS NOT ACCEPTED, IT WILL HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PRESS INTO SERVICE THE STATE'S COERCIVE POWER TO CRUSH THE ELEMENTS IGNITING FIRES AND PUTTING IN JEOPARDY THE LIFE AND PROPERTY OF LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS ... THIS IS THUS THE LAST CHANCE FOR THE PNA TO REACH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, AND IF IT MISSES IT, IT WILL HAVE NONE BUT ITSELF TO BLAME FOR THE CONSEQUENCES."

5. THROUGHOUT MUCH OF PAKISTAN THE PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS OF PAST DAYS CONTINUED; VIOLENCE WAS REPORTED IN ONLY A FEW PLACES. KARACHI, AS CONGEN KARACHI HAS REPORTED BY SEPTEL, WAS THE SCENE OF DIMINISHED, BUT CONTINUED DISTURBANCES. IN LAHORE THE DAILY OFFERING OF A SMALL NUMBER OF PNA LEADERS FOR ARREST BY VIOLATING SECTION 144 CONTINUED, BUT PEACEFULLY. OTHER PUNJAB TOWNS AND CITIES ALSO OHESERVED PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS, BUT IN SARGODHA AND LYALLPUR DEMONSTRATIONS WERE MARKED BY VIOLENCE THAT INCLUDED LATHI CHARGES AND TEAR GAS. QUETTA, THE SCENE OF A PEACEFUL PROCESSION, REMAINED QUIET AND THE FRONTIER ALSO SAW NO DISTURBANCE AS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS. HYDERABAD PROVED THE GREAT EXCEPTION, AS POLICE AND FSF UNITS REPORTEDLY SHOT SEVERAL PERSONS TO DEATH AND 40 WOMEN WERE SAID TO BE INJURED AS THE RESULT OF MARCH 21 DEMONSTRATIONS. AFTERWARD THE TOWN OBSERVED A HARTAL IN PROTEST OF THE HEAVY REPRESSION OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS. LATER PNA LEADERS IN HYDERABAD ADDRESSED A PRESS CONFERENCE AND, IN A NEW TWIST, DEMANDED THAT HYDERABAD AND ADJACENT LATIFABAD BE HANDED OVER TO THE ARMY TO INSURE PEACE.
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